Number 137, April 1998

# Security of the Western Hemisphere

## *International Terrorism and Organized Crime*

### by Max G. Manwaring

## Conclusions

- International terrorism and organized crime (ITOC), are engaged in what the Organization o: American States (OAS) has recently defined as "grave common crime."

- ITOC are powerful enough to destabilize, challenge, and destroy targeted societies and states. The increasing influence and power of ITOC are generating transnational threats.

- The threat posed by ITOC is too great and too complex for civilian institutions to confront by themselves. The military could and should assist in internal protection missions if its operational role is carefully limited by a legal democratic regime.

- Today's security requirements call for a coordinated and cooperative application not only of all national civilian and military resources but also those of a variety of international and functional organizations.

- Because success against ITOC requires close unilateral and multilateral coordination, th responsibility should devolve to the OAS.

## The Issues

Despite the obvious differences between the organizations, tactics, motives, and objectives of the various elements that constitute international terrorism and organized crime (ITOC), all have one thing in common—they are engaged in what the Organiza-tion of American States (OAS) has recently defined as "grave common crime." This situation is more than a complex law enforcement problem. It requires broadening the concept of national security from the traditional notion of unilateral territorial protection to a nontraditional concept of unilateral *and* multilateral protection of peoples and governments.

ITOC are powerful enough to destabilize, challenge, and destroy targeted societies and states. The continued growth and the increasing influence and power of ITOC are generating transnational threats. Nations (acting by themselves) are incapable of combating this phenomenon. Today's security requirements call for a coordinated and cooperative application of all national civilian and military

resources in full harmony with those of a variety of international and functional organizations. National and international political rivalries can no longer be permitted to inhibit the pursuit and prosecution of the perpetrators of grave common crime.

Because success against ITOC requires close unilateral and multilateral coordination and cooperation for an effective unity of effort, the only viable approach to the transnational threat to hemispheric stability and security is to devolve the responsibility to the OAS. That organization provides a moral position and structural framework to which member states can devolve the responsibility for the promulgation of binding international agreements directed against grave common crime; the development of an integrated multilateral anti-ITOC action plan; the planning and implementation of a coordinated and legitimized policy; and the establishment of a supportive security regime designed to maximize advantage and to compete effectively against ITOC.

There is a certain reluctance to take the broadened definition of national security to its logical conclusion and correspondingly broaden the role of the military to a controversial internal protection mission. The threat posed by ITOC, however, is too great and too complex for civilian institutions to confront by themselves. The military could and should assist in internal protection missions if it is properly trained and its operational role carefully limited by a legal democratic regime. In the Western Hemisphere, the OAS and its various parts—including the Inter-American Defense Board and the Inter-American Defense College—provide a multilateral, legal, and democratic institutional infrastructure that can evolve to help meet the challenges of contemporary security and stability problems.

**Assessing the Threat**

The problems imposed by ITOC are indeed legitimate national and international security treats. Given the divisive and destructive impact of these problems on societies and governments, more is at stake than traditional law and order. Regional and world stability and security are at risk.

Within the context of Western Hemispheric security, there are four issues relating to international terrorism and organized crime: (1) the threat of ITOC and its implications for society and government; (2) the applicability of this threat outside the Hemi-sphere; (3) whether the OAS can effectively confront this transnational phenomenon; and, (4) the role of the Inter-American Defense Board and the military in helping generate national and international capabilities to deal effectively with ITOC.

**The ITOC Threat**

In the past, national security was a term primarily associated with the protection of a nation's territory and vital external interests against external physical assault. Now, however, national security has a more extensive meaning than protection from external physical aggression. It implies protection, through a variety of means, of vital internal political, economic, and social interests, the loss of which could undermine the fundamental values of a society and the stability and existence of a state.

Terrorism and organized crime act as multipliers of all other forms of violence and crime. Everyone in a society is affected directly or indirectly, and the bonds that unite a government, its people, and its protective institutions are broken. Where such fragmentation exists, social cohesion is absent, broad-based consensus become virtually impossible, and national will breaks down entirely. Thus, ITOC—regardless of differing terrorist, insurgent, militantly reformist, or criminal bases—divides, corrupts, destabilizes, and destroys societies as well as governments. This has been defined by the OAS as "grave common crime." Consequently, concrete national and international security as well as law

enforcement measures must be taken to combat this threat to national, regional, and world stability.

## Applicability outside the Western Hemisphere

At least eight facts make ITOC progressively more mobile, flexible, powerful, and universally threatening:

- High profitability provides vast resources for expansion.

- The apparently declining ability of fragile governments to manage and protect a modern nation-state allows correspondingly greater opportunity for ITOC growth.

- Political, economic, social, and ethnic turmoil and environmental degradation are creating large-scale refugee flows that terrorists and organized criminals follow and exploit for their own purposes.

- Border porosity between interdependent states increases mobility and flexibility and aid expansion of illicit as well as legal enterprise.

- Virtually unlimited access to improved technology makes it relatively easier to evade law enforcement and concentrate on growth.

- The general availability of conventional and more sophisticated weaponry and the attendant intimidation and corruption allow ITOC to survive the efforts of national law enforcement organizations and encourage expansion.

- The efficient and tightly controlled ITOC organizations use the structural features best designed to generate unity of effort, aid growth, and promote expansion of influence and power.

- The relative weakness and disorganization of law enforcement agencies allow terrorists and criminals a relatively unconstrained level of freedom to expand and become more effective.

No single country, not even the United States, can deal with terrorist and organized crime growth and expansion—and the concomitant threat—by itself. The effective management of an adequate effort to confront ITOC requires internal and external cooperation. Internal cooperation requires the coordination of ways and means in interagency processes. External cooperation requires the synchronization of ways and means in international processes. Working together, the nation-states of the Hemisphere and the world must organize and work toward a unity of effort against the transnational ITOC threat.

## The Role of the Organization of American States

One viable approach to the threat in the Western Hemisphere is to devolve responsibility for stability and security to the OAS. That organization provides a moral position and structural framework from which to generate an effective, unified anti-ITOC effort.

Once the OAS leadership has created a strategic political anti-ITOC vision regarding exactly where it is going and how it is going to get there, it can initiate an action plan with a series of treaties and conventions. The immediate objective would be to generate "hard law." "Hard" international agreements must contain binding commitments by states and enforcement mechanisms that provide harmony,

accountability, transparency, and means to impose effective sanctions on noncomplying member states.

A comprehensive OAS action plan must also address the ITOC phenomenon with three different functional strategic-level programs. Activities in these areas must constantly demonstrate strict respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. The functional strategic programs are:

- serious political, economic, social, and stability development programs intended to strengthen the institutions and infrastructures of pivotal member states and eventually ameliorate the root causes that result in terrorism and organized crime;

- massive educational and public relations programs that are designed to mobilize public opinion and to facilitate the will and ability of the peoples of the Western Hemisphere to help protect themselves from the terrorist-organized crime threat; and,

- concrete national and international security programs that will develop protective instruments capable of neutralizing the perpetrators of grave common crime.

Additionally, there are eight highly interrelated factors that experience indicates are key to success against ITOC. These factors operate at a lower level of abstraction than those outlined above but would be an integral part of an OAS action plan. They are:

- a management structure to unify effort at the international level;

- a management structure to guarantee a unified civil-military effort at the national level

- appropriate utilization of information technology to craft different versions for every audience segment in an ITOC-targeted society and to influence the emotions, objective reasoning, motives, and behavior of individuals rather than societies;

- extension of the scope of the informational instrument of power to develop knowledge strategies to help bring prosperity to particular individuals rather than abstract nation-states;

- a mechanism for oversight and canalization of the military-police counter-ITOC effor

- appropriate training and equipment for the protective instruments of the state and the international community;

- plans and programs to enhance the exchange of expertise and other resources and to continue the development of confidence-building measures for multilateral cooperation against the common threat; and,

- greater emphasis on intelligence organizations for direct use against ITOC and for indirect use against problems like hunger, disaster, and environmental degradation that can make desperate populations into pawns of ITOC.

The recommendations outlined above do not constitute an all-inclusive list of considerations the OAS might incorporate into an anti-ITOC action plan. They are only a beginning. Each of the above ideas—and others—must be refined and elaborated by competent staff work conducted within the OAS. The present OAS structure, financial resources, and expertise are inadequate to the above tasks,

however. Thus, sufficient additional organization, funding, and professional staffing must be generated to create a critical forum in which member states can define and implement their legitimate security and stability concepts.

## The Role of the Military

Because the Inter-American Defense Board is an organization within the OAS structure, it is logical that it could help deal with the ITOC problem. Nevertheless, civilians are concerned about continued military autonomy and immunities, as well as previous excesses, while military officers are concerned that the armed forces of the Hemisphere might be reduced to mere ornamental structures. Civil-military agreement to allow an internal anti-ITOC role for the armed forces must be based on the idea that the military role could be canalized by a legal democratic regime.

Two realities contribute to that civil-military agreement. The first reality concerns the coercive potential of ITOC. The second relates to the fact that a holistic and integrated national and international civil-military effort is required to deal effectively with ITOC.

First, it is argued that ITOC is conducting a war. That war is an unconventional war that is in fact more destabilizing and destructive than conventional war. Thus, ITOC is a serious national security problem. At the same time, terrorists and organized criminals have the effective organization, growing financial resources, and undisputed will to use all types of weapons—at all levels of sophistication—to achieve their objectives. Logic, coupled with the reality of unconventional war, dictates some kind of role for the armed forces within a holistic anti-ITOC effort.

Second, it is clear that the defeat of transnational terrorism and organized crime depends on an integrated unilateral *and* multilateral effort. In that context, close consultation with the United Nations, other regional organizations, and INTERPOL is required. Together, the individual components of the responsible international community can provide a multilateral, legal, and democratic institutional infrastructure from which to support an effective but limited military role in security and stability efforts directed against ITOC.

## Policy Implications

The imperative of investing in effective multilateralism to combat the grave common crime perpetrated by ITOC implies fundamental foreign and domestic policy changes for every country that might become involved. There must be a commitment to coordinate all the civil-military instruments of power in a unified effort to deal with the pervasive ITOC threat. There must also be a commitment to a substantive measure of regional and international cooperation for the same purpose. Finally, there must be allocation of sufficient political, monetary, and human resources to create the mechanisms that can and will support a well-planned, well-resourced, and well-synchronized national and international anti-ITOC effort.

In the simplest possible terms, the governments of the Western Hemisphere and other regions of the world have three choices. Two are negative, the other positive.

First, governments can continue to ignore the threats associated with the national, regional, and international disequilibrium imposed by ITOC. Second, governments can continue trying to interdict ITOC on an ad hoc, business-as-usual basis. In either of these cases it is not likely that the perpetrators of grave common crime will go away.

The positive approach is that governments can work through the Organization of American States or other legitimate international organizations to provide constructive support and direction for the policy and action changes required to deal effectively with the transnational threats imposed by international terrorism and organized crime. If this should be the case, the sooner the better.

The Strategic Forum provides summaries of work by members and guests of the Institute for National Strategic Studies and the National Defense University faculty. These include reports of original research, synopses of seminars and conferences,the results of unclassified war games, and digests of remarks by distinguished speakers.

Editor in Chief - Hans Binnendijk

Editor - Jonathan W. PierceNOTE

| **Return to Top** | **Return to Strategic Forum Index** | Return to Publications |

*Return to NDU Homepage*
*INSS Homepage*

# INTERNET DOCUMENT INFORMATION FORM

**A . Report Title:** Security of the Western Hemisphere

**B. DATE Report Downloaded From the Internet:** 09/25/01

**C. Report's Point of Contact: (Name, Organization, Address, Office Symbol, & Ph #):** National Defense University Press
Institute for National Strategic Studies
Washington, DC 20001

**D. Currently Applicable Classification Level:** Unclassified

**E. Distribution Statement A:** Approved for Public Release

**F. The foregoing information was compiled and provided by:**
DTIC-OCA, Initials: __VM__ Preparation Date 09/25/01

The foregoing information should exactly correspond to the Title, Report Number, and the Date on the accompanying report document. If there are mismatches, or other questions, contact the above OCA Representative for resolution.